

**First 5 California**  
**Comprehensive Approaches to**  
**Raising Educational Standards**  
**(CARES) Plus**

**Frequently Asked Questions**  
**January 11, 2011**

**EVALUATION**

1. Will a CARES Plus database be provided by First 5 CA and/or can a local database be utilized provided it meets all data requirements?

***Answer: Yes. First 5 California will be providing the CARES Plus database. However, counties may elect to use a locally developed database. If they choose to do so, data requirements remain as identified in the RFA. We will inform counties on file upload specifications after the awards process.***

2. Participants will have six months to complete the Intro to CLASS and Looking at CLASSrooms (LAC) training requirements. How will participants' hours be tracked and how will hours completed be shared with local program administrators to ensure participants are meeting and completing the training requirements?

***Answer: The LAC Web site will track individual user's system access and will issue a certificate to the user upon completion.***

3. For counties that have aligned their CARES Plus and AB 212 programs (all participants meet the same requirements), will the AB 212 participants be able to be tracked in the CARES Database?

***Answer: Yes. Data on AB 212 participants may be tracked in the CARES Plus database.***

4. The required fields for the CARES Plus database do not include the following categories of coursework listed as priorities after the lower division Core 8:
  - Courses related to child outcomes (Infant/Toddler, Language and Literacy, Dual Language, Numeracy, and Social-Emotional development)
  - Courses related to improved CLASS scores

If the database goes straight from the Core 8 to general education, how are we to track the above categories?

***Answer: The courses referenced above related to child outcomes and CLASS scores should be categorized in one of the other "Coursework Type" categories, other than "Core 8" or "GE". Advisors may classify these courses in the "ECE", "CD", or other "Courses Related to Education (Psych, Special Education)" as appropriate, (see Appendix L).***

5. Please verify that a local county may pay for local Introduction to the CLASS trainings using trainers certified by Teachstone, and that participants who complete these trainings would meet the Introduction to the CLASS requirement.

***Answer: No. For FY 11/12 and FY 12/13, First 5 California requires all CARES Plus participants to take the online Intro to the CLASS training as indicated in the RFA. First 5 California will consider other delivery methods for the training in future CARES Plus Program funding years. If a county chooses to provide support to participants outside of the online environment, they may elect to do so but the participant will not receive a First 5 California stipend for completing such training.***

6. Can you provide the computer requirements a participant will need to complete the online CLASS work (e.g., what kind of operating system, what version of Internet browser, etc.)?

***Answer: The online Intro to the CLASS and LAC require a high-speed Internet connection (DSL or cable) and an up-to-date version of the Internet browser of your choice. No additional client software is required.***

## **FISCAL**

1. Federal Early Head Start (EHS) and Head Start (HS) funds are noted as allowable cash matches. How are these funds intended to be matched?

***Answer: The lead agency is responsible for identifying, documenting, and accounting for the county cash match requirement in order to be eligible to draw down CARES Plus state funds. Consistent with the CARES Plus RFA, lead agencies may count local cash match contributions from other local funding partners toward the cash match requirement, such as EHS and HS. However, in this example, EHS and HS funds must be used exclusively to fund CARES Plus Phase II program implementation. These cash match contributions must be auditable and traceable (e.g., formal agreements, specific project codes, timesheets, expenditure reports, etc., maintained at the funding agency).***

***First 5 California will reimburse the lead agency directly for eligible state match funds. The distribution of the state funds to other local funding partners for local match contributions would be a local decision based on agreements established between the lead agency and the funding partners.***

2. For the implementation of CARES Plus, Napa First 5 will be the lead agency. We are planning to contract out most of the work to Community Resources for Children, although First 5 will be using some funds for evaluation. Should budget forms 9a and 9b include budget detail as if the work was being performed by First 5 Napa?

***Answer: Yes. When reporting quarterly expenditures, a lead agency will be asked to complete a supplemental form that details the expenditures reported that were used for subcontracting services as well as the purpose of those subcontract agreements.***

- Does 1:2 match mean, for example, a \$300,000 annual local investment to draw down \$150,000 maximum F5CA match, or a \$450,000 local investment to draw down \$150,000 maximum match?

**Answer:** *Based on the example above, a lead agency with a 1:2 match requirement requesting the maximum annual allocation must submit a Phase II budget that shows the planned expenditures for \$450,000 in order to request the state fund match reimbursement amount of up to \$150,000 annually. Below is a table that exemplifies the 1:2 match for Phase II funding for two fiscal years.*

**Group C (1:2)**

County	State	Local	Total
Year 1	\$150,000	\$300,000	<b>\$450,000</b>
Year 2	\$150,000	\$300,000	<b>\$450,000</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$300,000</b>	<b>\$600,000</b>	<b>\$900,000</b>

Lead Agency, a Group C county, must show total expenditures in the amount of \$900,000 in order to receive \$300,000 in State funds.

- In the FAQs posted on December 10<sup>th</sup>, page 2, question # 2 (sic) under “Fiscal,” it states that “the 15% administrative costs cap pertains to First 5 California reimbursable costs.” Can you provide more clarity on this statement? Are local funds used for the match requirement subject to the 15% administrative cap?

**Answer:** *No. Consistent with the CARES Plus RFA Section VI.B. Administrative Costs, the administrative costs shall not exceed 15% of the total reimbursable costs. The reimbursable costs refer to First 5 California funds only.*

- On the Application Checklist, it indicates that we need to include “Form 10 – Program Operations Budget Instructions.” If this form only includes instructions, why do we need to include it in the application? Is there something on this form we need to complete?

**Answer:** *No. Form 10 ‘Program Operations Budget Instructions’ will be deleted from the application checklist.*

## **PROGRAM**

- Our local AB 212 funding supports trainings that are open to the entire county. Our plan is for those trainings to become part of the "Component A" CARES Plus trainings. Since AB 212 local funding will not be spent on stipends for state-subsidized pre-K staff, can this staff participate in the stipend portion of the CARES Plus plan we are developing together?

**Answer:** *Only officially enrolled CARES Plus participants who have completed all CORE and component requirements may qualify to receive a CARES Plus stipend. A CARES Plus participant who also participates in AB 212 is eligible for only one stipend, not both. AB 212-funded trainings cannot be used as a local cash match for the CARES Plus program.*

2. If a partner agency or college counselors serve as CARES Advisors in lieu of Component C or commission staff, can the cost of their time to advise CARES participants be used as cash match?

***Answer: If these positions are paid with state funds, then their salaries and time would not qualify as a local cash match. However, if these positions are funded by local monies, the positions may be used as cash match as long as the actual salaries and time spent were dedicated solely to the CARES Plus Program and can be sufficiently documented to ensure the expenditures are auditable and traceable.***

3. Are you able to provide specific links to CDE-approved providers and available CDE-sponsored training?

***Answer: The following Web sites provide specific information regarding CDE-approved providers and sponsored training: <http://www.wested.org/caresplus> and <http://www.cpin.us>***

4. Are you able to provide specific guidelines for how to increase capacity with local funds?

***Answer: First 5 California encourages the local child care community to assess and make local decisions to achieve increased capacity with available local funds.***

5. Would Head Start providers who have already received the 4-6 hour overview of CLASS by in-house trainers who attended the train-the-trainer be required to complete another CLASS overview? If not, what documentation is needed?

***Answer: Previous Intro to CLASS training cannot be substituted in the CARES Plus program. Participants will be required to complete the Intro to CLASS offered by First 5 California. It will be given as a 2-hour Webinar.***

6. Which of the CORE requirements must be repeated in Year 2 for continuing participants?

***Answer: All CORE requirements must be completed within the first 12 months from the program enrollment date. Once completed, there are no additional CORE requirements in Year 2.***

7. Could you please share information about including any of the ECERS scales for CARES Plus as part of Component A if offered through the County Office of Education? Our county has not previously participated in CARES and would like to know if the scales might be able to be included to help build the foundation of process quality already infused into other counties.

***Answer: The CARES Plus Program only pays stipends for those trainings listed in Component A. However, we encourage ECERS Training as it is one of several important tools in assessing quality within the early learning environment.***

8. We are convening our stakeholders and may need to complete a formal proposal process to select a contractor to administer a portion of the CARES Plus Program. The budget form does not seem to indicate that knowing the exact contractor is a requirement for the RFA. Can you please confirm that we can submit a proposal with this detail still being finalized?

**Answer: Yes. While a specific contractor might not be identified at the time of the application, the intent to subcontract must be included in the Project Narrative and Description. Budget Forms 9A and 9B must provide an overall budget for the implementation of the program. The quarterly reimbursement forms will require the lead agency to identify the subcontractors and the specific amount of funds paid for program services.**

9. The original RFA states that participants may work directly or indirectly with children. Would home-based educators qualify when all other requirements are met?

**Answer: First 5 California does not reference “home-based educators” in the RFA. Please refer to Section II.J for participant eligibility requirements.**

10. Will new participants be accepted in Year 2?

**Answer: Yes. A new participant may enter the CARES Plus Program in Year 2.**

11. If there is scheduled “in-person” training by CLASS trainers during the summer of 2011, can participants count that as meeting the “Introduction to CLASS” requirement, and then subsequently complete the online video library and the remaining CORE requirements?

**Answer: No. The training for Intro to CLASS must be completed through First 5 California’s CARES Plus Program.**

12. Our planning consortium wants to design our program to have CORE plus 3 units (in Component B) as an option, as well as CORE plus 6 units (in Component B), with differing stipend levels to encourage greater participation recognizing the challenge our participants may have in college attendance. Will this be an acceptable variation to the minimum requirements stated in Component B?

**Answer: No. A lead agency can develop policies that add to Component B requirements but can not reduce or change these requirements.**

13. Our county is interested in setting up support groups to help providers use the technology and get through Intro to CLASS and LAC. In this model, will assignment of user ID’s make it possible to hold a facilitated group training (e.g., one screen, projected), or do we need to have a computer lab where participants log on to their computers simultaneously?

**Answer: A group setting is allowed for Intro to CLASS. However, a group setting is not allowed for Looking at CLASSrooms (LAC).**

14. If a participant can document that they have been previously trained on CLASS by a certified trainer within the last two years, do they still have to complete the Introduction to the CLASS training?

**Answer: Yes. Intro to the CLASS must be completed through First 5 California's CARES Plus Program.**

15. Programs must add Components A or B, or can add both. Regardless of the number of Components incorporated in a local program, participants may only select one Component in addition to the required CORE. Why are participants limited to selecting either Component A or B?

**Answer: The lead agency determines the local program design, and it must include either Component A or B, or both A and B. A participant, with guidance from an advisor, reviews the county design and determines the appropriate component or components in which to participate. If a local design includes both A and B, and the advisor recommends that a participant complete both components, there is no reason to limit the participant to a single component.**

16. What is the definition of "CDE-sponsored" and "CDE-approved"? Does it refer exclusively to CDE-contracted individuals, or CPIN?

**Answer: Courses in Component A are CDE-sponsored and includes CPIN trainings. For more information regarding these trainings please visit CPINs Web site at <http://www.cpin.us/>.**

17. Can Component A work being conducted in San Mateo satisfy Component A requirements (i.e., PITC is being taught by WestEd)?

**Answer: While a PITC course taught by WestEd is acceptable, an individual can only receive a stipend if they are a CARES Plus participant, and must complete the PITC training offered through the CARES Plus Program starting July 1, 2011.**

18. For Component D, does the stipulation of eligibility of only lead or master teacher refer strictly to the permit or to the position, and is it those two permits only or those two permits or higher?

**Answer: Determining who is a "lead or master" teacher is a local decision that will need to be determined by the highest administrator or owner of a center or a licensed family child care home. For Component D, if a participant directly interacts with children on a daily basis, he/she would be eligible to participate in Component D.**

23. In the latest FAQ (December 17<sup>th</sup>), it was stated that “Phase I Planning and Development funds can not be used for a training of trainers for CLASS.” Can Phase I funding be used to send staff for the one-day or two-day training on CLASS? We have determine that current staff, ECE Advisors, and Technical Assistant Specialists will need to be trained on the tool in order to be able to assist participants with developing CLASS goals, implementing strategies to achieve those goals, and ongoing coaching in order to improve classroom interactions. We would like to register staff for the regional CLASS training (one or two days) that will be held in San Diego in March. Would this be an allowable cost for Phase I Planning and Development funds?

***Answer: Yes. Phase I funds may be used by the lead agency to train local staff who will work with CARES Plus participants during Phase II. However, every CARES Plus participant is required to complete the CORE requirements as outlined in the RFA and will not receive credit for any CORE classes completed prior to June 30, 2011.***

24. Please verify: Lead agencies may bring participants together to complete the Introduction to CLASS Training, but they must all individually complete the Introduction to CLASS? May the Introduction to CLASS be projected on the main screen for all to meet the requirement?

***Answer: The Intro to CLASS can be viewed as a group; however, in order for each participant to obtain confirmation of course completion, each individual will be required to log into the Webinar to secure a certificate of completion.***

25. How will CARES Plus Programs determine if the FCC provider should follow the Infant, Toddler, or Preschool requirements for the CORE? Will it be based on the majority of children served? How will this be determined and/or verified?

***Answer: This is a local determination. A participant should confer with his/her local program administrator or a CARES Plus Advisor to determine the most appropriate of these requirements for that participant.***

26. Please explain the expectations if the planning budget submitted with the application differs from the actual expenditures at year end.

***Answer: At the time of application, the lead agency must submit Form 7, which provides the high-level Phase I budget, and Form 8, which provides detail on how Phase I funding will be used. Lead agencies will report actual expenditures in July 2011. If there are significant differences between proposed and actual expenditures, the lead agency will be asked to explain. Lead agencies can be reimbursed only for allowable Phase I – Planning and Development Funds, as described in the CARES Plus RFA.***

27. Do counties need to provide an additional stipend to those CARES Plus participants who are selected to participate in the First 5 CLASS pre/post observations?

***Answer: This is a local determination. Please refer to the RFA, Section II, I.3.***

28. Can a county use Phase I Planning Funds to purchase CLASS Dimension Guides to distribute to participants in Phase II?

***Answer: There is no need for lead agencies to purchase CLASS Dimension Guides as these will be provided by First 5 California.***

29. Will participants who are selected to participate in the state's pre- and post-CLASS assessments need to have parents/guardians of children in the classroom sign a consent form or be notified about the observations and their purpose?

***Answer: Yes. First 5 California is developing this research protocol and will be disseminating this information to counties when it is approved. Participants selected for CLASS assessment or MTP will inform the families that their children's images or interactions may be video recorded for training purposes.***

30. It is our understanding that Teachstone will be issuing user ID's and passwords for the CLASS directly to participants via email. Does this mean participants will be required to have an email address to participate in CARES Plus?

***Answer: Yes. Participants must have access to a specific email address.***